

Socialist Worker

Water Charges, Housing chaos, Pay cuts and longer Hours Enough Is Enough: We Need a Revolt

The recent local and Euro elections showed that the mass of Irish workers have had enough. After years of pay cuts, tax hikes and reduced public services a cry has gone out: Enough is Enough.

The political establishment are worried but their room to manoeuvre is restricted because they are committed to more austerity. The former Fine Gael leader, John Bruton who works as a consultant to the financial sector, even claimed that ten more years of austerity is needed.

The government may give tiny concessions as a response to their electoral shock but they will keep squeezing the living standards of low and middle income Ireland.

We need to take the anger displayed at the ballot box and turn it into a mass revolt in the streets and in the workplaces. The FG-Labour government has been weakened and we can inflict defeats on them.

Already small signs of growing resistance are in evidence.

Resistance

In some working class housing estates – most notably in Cork and in Dublin – people have stood up against water metering. In one estate on Dublin's Northside, Gardai were deployed to aid the Irish Water workers.

There are also small signs of fighting at the grassroots of the union movement.

Aer Lingus cabin crews stood up to the bullying and scheming of their bosses and forced them to take on 20 new staff and take seriously their demand for new rosters.

These small signs of resistance can grow – provided we do not fall for any suggestion that we should wait until a general election delivers us a government made up of some combination of Sinn Féin and Fianna Fail that will lift the burden of austerity.

Fight back

All experience shows that the only way to lift that burden is by taking action ourselves. Over the next few months, we need to fight on a range of fronts.

Water: The government wants to make us pay for water from October and will be sending out the bills from January 2015.

We need to prepare for massive street demonstrations, leading on to civil disobedience and non-payment. Whether or not, Irish Water gets away with installing water meters, we can still defeat them through a display



of real people power.

Housing: Government policy is based on pushing up house prices again so that its property agency, NAMA, makes a profit. This has led to a massive housing crisis in a number of cities with rents rising and housing lists growing. It is so bad in Dublin, that finding even a homeless shelter is difficult. We need major street protests to reverse this policy.

Unions: Our unions have been infiltrated and taken over by Labour Party hacks. SIPTU, for example hung out a huge banner of Labour MEP candidate, Emer Costello, from its Dublin headquarters during the Euro election.

But despite these machinations, she got only half the votes of two radical left candidates, Brid Smith and Paul Murphy.

We need to liberate unions from the stranglehold of the Labour Party and renew their fighting spirit.

Major changes are underway and we can shape a new future if a real revolt spreads.

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How to fight the water meters

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Analysis of the local and European elections.

Iraq: The Bitter Legacy of US Invasion

The US invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq in 2003 cost nearly a million lives and an estimated one trillion dollars. But 11 years on, it has created a nightmare for the West and the region.

An unofficial state that stretches from Aleppo in Syria to Northern Iraq is ruled over by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Isis, also known as Isil), an organisation that even Al Qaida has denounced as too "extreme".

Their audacious capture of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, and string of Sunni Muslim towns has sent shockwaves through the region.

In response the Iraqi government has mobilised Shia militias on an openly sectarian basis.

Iraq is now on the precipice of a truly horrific sectarian civil war pitting Shia against Sunni. This could also trigger an ethnic war between Kurds and Arabs over the control of Kirkuk, the ethnically mixed city in the heart of the country's biggest oil reserves.

The Kurds, who want Kirkuk to be the capital of a future independent state, have seized the city after the Iraqi army abandoned its bases there.

It is a conflict that could embroil Turkey, and most bizarre of all, Iranian troops coordinating with US airpower against a common enemy.

Iraq's spiral into a new sectarian war is a result of the occupation, and the tactics used by western forces to defeat the 2003 national uprising.

At the time, the US and its coalition allies sought to engineer sectarian tensions to divide a growing national liberation movement.



Shia militia leave Baghdad on their way to fight Isis insurgents

Faced with a rebellion that united Shia and Sunni Muslims, the occupation opted for a strategy that carved up state institutions by offering to hand the country over to Shia sectarian parties.

The second part of the strategy was the so-called "sons of Iraq" movement. Elements of the tribal insurgency were promised a stake in a future state in return for pacifying Sunni majority areas. That plan, coupled with the surge in US troops, seemed to have paid off.

The Iraqi state that emerged under the occupation was corrupt and deeply divisive. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki deepened the schism by further alienating the country's Sunni minority and threatening the

autonomous Kurdish regions in the north.

Disenfranchised Sunnis began peaceful protests in December 2012 in what was known as the "Iraqi Spring". Security forces attacked the camps, killing dozens of people. Maliki then flooded Sunni areas with his security forces.

Thousands of people were rounded up, tortured and killed.

A deep disaffection with Maliki's rule precipitated the disintegration of security forces in the face of Isis. Now his government is close to collapse.

The prospect of an intractable and bloody sectarian civil war in Iraq is the bitter legacy of the 2003 invasion.

Anti-Racists mobilise in Belfast

PETER Robinson's disgraceful attack on Muslims brought thousands onto the streets in protest. 4000 people attended a rally at Belfast City Hall at short notice while the following week over 8000 people march through the city despite torrential rain.

Robinson's inflammatory comments about 'not trusting Muslims' lead directly to racist attacks.

Shortly afterwards there were attacks in the city centre against a local umbrella seller and in Shabb Dabb in West Belfast against a Nigerian man who lives there with his family.

The Belfast Anti Racism Network responded quickly to these attacks calling a well attended protest at short notice to show solidarity with the victims of racism.

The trade unions need to keep up the momentum in order to keep the racists on the fringes of society where they belong.

Building a broad based Anti Racism Network which involves trade unionists, ethnic minority groups and community workers, which responds quickly to these attacks is going to be essential for the weeks ahead.

National Gallery strike over cuts



ON Thursday, 5 June the National Gallery in Dublin was closed due to a workers strike.

Management had unilaterally attempted to withdraw 7 days leave from security staff and one day's premium pay.

A statement from the workers spoke of the impact these cuts will have, and also the continuous hardship they face.

'Like other public sector workers we have suffered serious cuts to our

wages over the last five years. Successive Governments chose to bail out the bankers and big developers by underwriting their private losses in the Irish property bubble.'

'We, along with all other ordinary workers and taxpayers generally, bear the brunt of this.'

'However the cost to maintain our families, mortgages and rents have not decreased over that time. In fact, a raft of new taxes on our homes and

an impending tax on water means it becomes more difficult to make ends meet.'

Speaking to Socialist Worker on the day Joe said, 'We came out because management have looked after themselves and screwed us.'

'Under the standardisation of leave agreement they brought themselves down to 32 days leave and us down to 25 days.'

Stephen, the shop steward, explained

to Socialist Worker about the terms and conditions the workers have already lost:

'We have already given two and a half hours free a week recently, which is the loss of a half hour lunch break - all for more efficiency for the Gallery and the Government.'

'Staff work Thursday to Thursday an 8 day week, working up to 8.30pm. Management had ample time to get the working hours sorted'.

Cabin crew make gains after one-day strike action

CABIN crews, who staged a one day strike at Aer Lingus, have forced their company to take on 20 new staff and engage with a 'technical group' which will bring in a fixed five days on and three days off roster for short haul flights.

Originally, management at Aer Lingus refused to have any kind of discussion on improving the working conditions of cabin crew. They

threatened workers with the loss of 300 jobs but this did not deter workers from taking strike action on 30 May.

Some of the media portrayed the cabin crew as unreasonably. But they barely mentioned the scandal of a €175,000 pension and annual pay package of €1.5 million for the company's chief executive, Christoph Mueller.

Socialist Worker spoke to the cabin

crew workers. Audrey explained that 'We were working a 13 day pattern with split days, sometimes 6:16. After one day off, we had to commence work again at 5 am.'

'We have split half breaks on a 16 hour duty. Sometimes we just get 10 minute breaks here and there.'

'We are obsessed with sleep and clock watching, wondering will I have an hour's sleep or something to eat.'

Elaine and Ann spoke about their erratic rosters resulting in no work and lifestyle balance.

'We have had fantastic support from other IMPACT unions and groups around Ireland, including our pilots.'

'It is a last resource to go on strike, but we didn't have any other choice after three years of trying to get Aer Lingus to engage in constructive talks, to no avail'.

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WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is sucking the life out of millions and endangering the planet.

A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.

To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on mass

greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR
War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the world.

The "War on Terrorists" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION
We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

existing class.
We are for full social, economic and political equality for everyone.

We oppose immigrations controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE WORKERS' PARTIES
We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Carronite government.

We stand for the formation of a socialist left-wing party and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

workers' gain.
Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.

We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

Join the Socialists
Fill in the form and send to SWP PO Box 1048 Dublin 8

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Irish Rail: Battle Looms Over Pay Cuts

Irish Rail is looking for more pay cuts from their staff and has been backed up by the Labour Court. But workers have rejected the biased 'judgement' of the notorious pro-employer body.

In a crushing signal of defiance, over 75 percent of SIPTU and NRB members rejected the Labour Court recommendation.

The Court had all but accepted management's case for pay cuts - suggesting only that they last 28 months rather than 36 months. This scandalous recommendation - which has now become a familiar pattern - shows that the court cannot be regarded as a neutral body by workers. It operates effectively as a government agency, backing up a policy of reducing the wages of Irish workers.

State cuts

The crisis in Irish Rail arises from a policy of cutting the state subvention from €171 million in 2009 to €117 in 2014.

Like much else in Irish society, money for basic public services is being siphoned off to pay bondholders and bankers debt.

Despite these huge cuts, however, there has been no shortage of well paid managerial positions in Irish Rail.

After workers' rejection of the deal, Irish Rail CEO David Franks claimed that the company would unilaterally impose the cuts if talks did not succeed in getting more 'savings' from workers.

SIPTU members have voted to take industrial action if any attempt is made to do this while the NRB has walked out of talks.

SNAs: Sneaky Circular For More Cuts

The Department of Education issued a lengthy circular on Special Needs Assistants which will have major implications for the future.

Assessment for special needs will no longer be undertaken simply by professionals such as psychiatrists or speech and language therapists. Instead the government is claiming that there will not be aware of the 'quantum' of resources available on the schools and instead officials will dictate.

Review

There will also be annual and three yearly reviews instead of an automatic entitlement to an SNA once a condition has been identified.

The recent furore over an official letter to a parent asking if a child still had Down's Syndrome is a harbinger of what is to come.

The aim of the new circular is to further reduce the service. Even though there has been a growth in the numbers of children looking for an SNA - from 38,400 in 2012 to 42,500 in 2013 - Quinn has set an artificial cap on the number of SNAs who can be employed.

Mother and Baby Homes: The savage reality of 'Holy Ireland'

By Anneke Mooney

The Tuam Mother and Baby home for 'fallen women' was opened in 1925 by the Bon Secours Sisters.

Originally from France, the Sisters came to Ireland to 'nurse the sick and the poor'.

Catherine Corless, a local historian, has highlighted the difference between the Sisters' mission statement and what they practiced in the mother and baby home.

Corless describes the eight-foot wall behind which 'home girls' lived.

The nuns described the 'home children' as different because they were to be 'stayed away from'. This reinforced beliefs that 'illegitimate' children didn't matter.

A fact highlighted by the death rate amongst children born out of wedlock.

State records and Dáil Debates show that from the 1930's onwards one in three children born outside marriage died within one year of their birth. This was five times higher than the national average.

Two children died per week between 1943 and 1946 in Tuam. This compares with figures from England and Wales at a whole where infant mortality was 56 per 1000 in 1940.

Death certificates from the Tuam Mother and Baby home show that children died from a variety of illnesses from measles to convulsions.

World Health Organisation

According to the World Health Organisation, seven out of ten childhood deaths in developing countries are caused by pneumonia, diarrhoea, measles, malaria and malnutrition - the latter often interacting with all of the others.

The Centre for Disease Control suggests that childhood deaths in the late 1930's were mainly caused by malnutrition. Deaths from infectious diseases had diminished strikingly by 1937.

Diarrhoeal disease deaths had been reduced to tiny numbers; typhoid fever had almost disappeared and measles deaths had been reduced sharply.

We can therefore conclude that the main cause of death in mother and baby homes was actually malnutrition.

To put it more bluntly, there was a regime in Church run Mother and Babies homes to allow troublesome 'illegitimate' children to die.

The adoption business

The babies who survived for more than a year became candidates for adoption. Death by malnourishment was a brutal policy of 'weeding out' the weaker specimens.

At the end of World War 2, Ireland gained a reputation among US servicemen and their wives as an easy place to access an adoption.

They could have adopted babies in the US, but those with a racist disposition who wanted to ensure there was no black genes in their babies looked to Ireland.

Ireland at the time was dominated by the fundamentalist Bishop John Charles McQuaid and his main concern was that their babies would not be sent to Protestant homes. He wanted them sent to 'good Catholic' homes in the US.

This was the origin of the 'babies for export' business that was run by the nuns.

With the collusion of the Irish state and the US embassy, they transported babies - without passports or birth certificates - to the US for a hefty fee.

The 1952 Adoption Act was deliberately framed to suit this practice because it insisted that there could be no adoptions before a baby was one year old.

This facilitated a brutal system whereby mothers stayed at the religious run institutions, bonded with their children - only to see them eventually whisked away from them.

Shame and punishment

In 1944, two hundred and seventy one children lived in the Tuam mother and baby home. Sixty one of the residents



Women gather outside the Dail to show their disgust at the treatment of Mothers and Babies in Tuam Bon Secours hell hole

were single mothers.

Young expectant mothers came to the home six weeks prior to their delivery date. Referred by their local parish priest, these young expectant mothers lived in overcrowded dormitories.

Usually the women were forced to stay in the homes for three years unless they could pay the huge sum of £100 to leave.

The average wage at the time was just £3 per week in 1955 and so only those who had families with some money could get out.

Once the baby was delivered in the maternity unit on the site some left without knowing if their children lived. Those that stayed behind were the poorer women living in a culture of shame and silence for decades.

They were forced to work for the nuns. The church declared that the harsh conditions were a form of corrective penance.

Even though capitation grants were paid to the religious orders by local authorities, the women were forced to work long hours on hard tasks.

They were forced to carry out humiliating and sometimes unnecessary work, such as plucking grass on their hands and knees.

They were deprived of their own clothing and forced to wear a uniform.

This was designed to humiliate them and prevent them escaping.

It was state policy that those who had a second baby outside marriage would automatically be sent to the Magdalene Laundry.

How the Bon Secours prospered

In 1944 the Bon Secours sisters started to run hospitals in the Tuam area, opening a small Nursing Home and later a larger hospital.

From these small and horrific beginnings, the order built up an extensive private health service today that mainly ministers to wealthier patients.

Bon Secours is the largest private hospital group in Ireland with 850 beds, over 2,000 staff that treat approximately 100,000 patients annually.

It has hospitals located in Cork, Dublin, Tralee and Galway together with a Care Village in Cork.

The Bon Secours in Cork opened a Maternity Hospital in 1958 catering for over 2,000 births each year that is still

there today.

Despite their mucky past, their profits have increased in recent years. Pre-tax profits in 2011, for example, at the overall hospital group grew by 20 percent to €11.68 million. Another company, the Bon Secours Health Systems Ltd based in Cork saw its profits rise from €219 million to €221 million.

Big Pharma was involved

In June 2001 an inquiry was ordered into medical trials on 58 children in 1960 and 1961, at six homes - including Bessboro. Results of those trials were published in the British Medical Journal in 1962.

However, the inquiry was halted by a UCD Professor Patrick Meenan, one of six authors of the study.

He suggested he was too old aged 86 and in ill health to defend his reputation. This ruling was given by Judge Ruairí Keane, who had an association with Charles Haughey.

Despite the closing down of the inquiry, it is clear that a company which is now part of GlaxoSmithKline used children at the homes for medical tests.

Wellcome administered drug trials for vaccines for tetanus, polio and rubella to children at these homes from 1960 to 1973. No consent was sought from their mothers.

The children involved were later identified by records sent from GlaxoSmithKline and letters were sent to them compelling them to attend the Laffey Inquiry. But despite this, the whole inquiry was closed down.

Further investigation into the role of this pharmaceutical company and UCD medical department is now required.

The role of the sisters in running hospitals and their part in sacrificing children for pharmaceutical companies to carry out drug trials could be considered.

There is, for example, some evidence that the bodies of some children from Mother and Baby Homes were given to anatomy departments in Irish universities for medical research.

The Birth Mother groups have called for support through compensation and a state apology. But until the church is removed from hospitals, schools and politics, there will be no justice for the women.



A Seismic Shift in Ireland

In the wake of the recent collapse of the Irish Labour party and the continuing decline of the traditional right—Kieran Allen looks at the prospects for socialists in the coming months, arguing that the rise of Sinn Fein should be met with qualified enthusiasm

Voting does not change society—but it can indicate the shifts and changes in political consciousness. The results of the May 2014 local and European elections show that a seismic shift is occurring.

This shift will not be reflected in the decisions of local councils.

Ireland has a highly centralised form of local government with most power vested in unelected managers, who have been renamed CEOs.

Councillors who think that they bring change from inside this fundamentally undemocratic structure, lose the plot.

They get suckered into supporting austerity budgets in return for gaining favours from council officials.

Ireland's clientelist style of politics, where votes are traded for favours, will continue.

But the shift in voting patterns will have much deeper, longer term consequences because it is breaking up Ireland's notorious two and a half party system.

Tectonic shifts away from the right

From 1932 to 2002, Fianna Fail scored an average of 45 percent of the vote.

Fine Gael meanwhile scored 30 percent, giving them a combined total of three quarters of all votes cast. The Labour Party made up the 'half', scoring an average of 11 percent and then, sometimes propping up one of the right wing parties in office.

The scale of the change in 2014 is breathtaking. Between them PP and FG only took 49% of the votes in the local elections and 44% in the Euro election.

In the Dublin euro and local elections, their combined vote declined to just 28%.

Two main factors are at play behind this steep decline.

One is that Fianna Fail has lost its hegemony over Irish workers.

Fianna Fail dominated Irish politics in the past because its vote was evenly spread across the social classes.

This meant that between 40 and 45% of manual workers voted for it. The Fianna Fail vision of linking

success stories for Irish capitalism with working class advance had a particular appeal in a country that had been colonised. The crash of 2008 and Fianna Fail's role in propping up bankers and building booms broke apart this hegemony and there are few signs that it can regain its position.

True, it gained 25% of the votes in local elections and returned the highest number of councillors. But its support base came from the most conservative and rural parts of Ireland, particularly in a midlands stretch from Cavan down to Kilkenny.

It gained only 16% of the votes in the Dublin area—just about half of what they received in Connacht-Ulster. Its local election share in Dublin was higher than the 12% share that its Euro candidate got.

The second factor has been the sharp decline in Fine Gael since 2011.

Before the crash of the Celtic Tiger, Fine Gael played the role of the B team for the ruling class. When Fianna Fail came under pressure an alternative right wing government could be formed with Fine Gael at its core.

Yet Fine Gael's support was always drawn from the upper professionals and the bigger farmers.

It became the largest party after 2011 only because many floating voters thought that it was the quickest way of ridding the country of Fianna Fail.

It never had a strong support base among workers and is now shrinking back to its traditional heartlands.

Labour Pains

The final element of the break-up of the two and half party system is the demise of the Labour Party, which gained only 7% of the national vote.

The Irish Labour Party's main support base is among the liberal upper professional groups and to a lesser extent skilled manual workers.

It has always been weak among unskilled manual workers, who have moved predominantly to Sinn Fein.

Even though their performance in Dublin is marginally higher than for the country as a whole, it is still weaker than the combined radical left.

If it stays in coalition any longer, it will go the way of the Greek Labour Party, Pasok, – into oblivion.



PBP Councillors Brid Smith, Sonya Stapleton and Tina Mac Veigh celebrate their recent success in the local election.

Anti-austerity policies raise Sinn Fein into a 'party of government'

The big winner in the election was Sinn Fein and Gerry Adams' boast that they are now Ireland's largest party is accurate. The party won because it deployed a determined anti-austerity rhetoric that cuts across the mainstream consensus.

It attacked the 'troika' of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour and argued that these had made 'political choices' in favour of the upper class and against low and middle income Ireland.

In the case of Mary Lou McDonald and to a lesser extent Pearse Doherty, the population found national voices that expressed their own feelings.

Sinn Fein's rise, therefore, did not come from a sudden surge of nationalism but primarily from its anti-austerity agenda. If anything, Luke Ming Flanagan was better able to tap into a more left nationalist anti-EU mood than Sinn Fein.

But as well as its anti-austerity policies, there is another aspect to Sinn Fein that has rarely been noticed.

It presents itself as the 'credible' left party that is able to do business with its establishment opponents in a way that the radical left cannot. In other words it is 'a party of government'.

The emphasis on being a potential government party pervades everything that Sinn Fein does. It accepts the EU strictures on public spending and frames its economic policy on the basis that the public sector deficit must be reduced to 3 percent by 2016.

It proposes a series of measures on taxing higher incomes and unproductive wealth—such as a third

tax band for those earning over €100,000 or a 1% income tax. But it carefully avoids any direct attack on capital in the form of extra tax on profits or nationalisation. It does not call for a higher corporate tax take from profits and it does not call for the nationalisation of the Corrib Gas field and other natural resources.

Playing by the rules

In other words, it plays by the rules of the capitalist system and seeks to manage this system more fairly. This craving for acceptance as political managers extends to the culture of the elite. Martin McGuinness' uncouth praise for Queen Elizabeth's role in the peace process is odd for a traditional republican. But the point of it, for the ever calculating McGuinness, is to show that Sinn Fein will have good table manners when they get into the elite dinner parties.

The major difference between Sinn Fein and the radical left is that they see protest movements as an adjunct prop for their TDs in the Dail. So Sinn Fein opposed the property tax but refused to call for a boycott because, they claimed, the movement has to be channelled into a Dail majority against the tax.

Similarly, Sinn Fein will oppose the water charges but it will not push people power as the primary mechanism for defeating it. Instead it promises that Sinn Fein in government will abolish these taxes.

In the current political environment, the



Ireland's Political Landscape



party of government'

'realism of Sinn Fein fits with the mood of workers. Workers are moving to the left – but they are doing so while still feeling demoralised. Major defeats have been inflicted because the union leaders deliberately took their movement 'out of the equation of protest', as SIPTU's Jack O'Connor put it.

In the context of defeat, only a minority of workers have confidence that they can rely on their own power to defeat the government.

That is why the honeymoon with Sinn Fein will not last forever – but will persist until workers learn from their own experience that Sinn Fein compromises with the establishment or they gain the confidence to fight for themselves.

What would a Sinn Fein government look like?

In the immediate aftermath of the elections, two patterns emerged in local government chambers.

In some cases, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael came together and dropped all pretence at a traditional hostility.

They faced a threat from more radical elements and simply carved up the committee positions between them.

In other cases, notably Dublin City Council and South Dublin, Sinn Fein took a lead in forming local pacts and did a deal with Labour and the Greens. Sinn Fein had attacked the establishment parties vigorously during the election but did deals with them afterwards.

Both scenarios could portend the future. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael could be forced together to form a government but that would be dangerous for the ruling class as it would reveal the spurious nature of Ireland's political game.

Or Sinn Fein could try to cobble together a mixture of independents or Labour to form a 'left' majority government that included Fianna Fail.

The second option is the preference within Sinn Fein – but a straight forward coalition deal with Fianna Fail has never been ruled out either.

Sinn Fein's policies can easily work for Irish capitalism, but the problem is that European capitalism has entered what appears to be a long period of stagnation.

Irish capitalism appears to be given a breathing space for the moment because there is a vast amount of global finance seeking a temporary home that gives a higher rate of return than the very low interest rates now available elsewhere. Some of it has been attracted to Ireland in the form of vulture funds which stoke up the property market and this explains why bond yields are low.

However, this will not last and Sinn Fein's entry into government will most probably occur at a time when Irish capitalism is still riven by crisis and stagnation.

If the party has already ruled out any attacks on profit bearing capital, it would be forced to reduce further the living standards of working people.

This – all too realistic scenario – explains why the radical left needs to grow quickly alongside Sinn Fein.

The rise of the radical Left



Two organisations, People Before Profit and the Alliance Against Austerity made a modest breakthrough in this election winning 29 council seats between them and scoring 15 percent of the vote in Dublin, more than twice that of the Labour Party.

These organisations – and other left groups and independents – should enter into discussions about how they can work together in social movements and explore what type of electoral arrangements they might want for the future.

One obstacle to such a development may be the repeated claim that Brid Smith should not have stood in the Dublin Euro election and even that she denied Paul Murphy a seat.

The reality, however, is that the Socialist party walked out of the United Left Alliance because of disagreements with Clare Daly.

Given that there was no formal structure for discussing who might be a candidate, each organisation had to pursue its own strategy.

Moreover, the 'if only' claim that Paul Murphy could have won a seat by himself makes little sense.

Both candidates had different bases, with Brid Smith drawing more support from the working class on the south of the city and so it is not possible to simply add their respective shares together and claim one candidate would have won.

The reality is that the radical left were caught by the surge to Sinn Fein and the ability of a candidate like Nessa Childers to collect transfers from all quarters.

Instead of raking over the past, it is time to move on and discuss the possibility of united initiatives.

In the meantime, People Before Profit

is embarking on a major period of expansion. From the outset, it made a pledge not to vote for any council budget that involved more cuts or join any pact with right wing parties.

It is an alliance between revolutionary socialists and those who have come out of a host of struggles.

That alliance is not simply built on a narrow economic agenda but embraces social demands for equality and justice.

The immediate priority for People Before Profit is to help build up grassroots resistance to water metering and water charges.

The seats it won are valuable mainly as a platform for encouraging 'people power'; to resist establishment attacks.

Alongside this, there is also an urgent need to break the grip that the Labour Party has exercised over the unions.

A real campaign needs to be mounted to press SIPTU to disaffiliate from a party that has helped to organise attack on its members.

In the immediate future, the prospects for the Irish left are bright.

Now is the opportunity to build rapidly to take advantage of the changing political landscape.



Brid Smith was People Before Profit candidate in Euro election.

Resistance to Water Charges intensifies

By Michael Wallace

Government lies and threats

Just before their thrashing in the Local and European elections, Fine Gael-Labour announced that the average cost of water charges per household would be €250 a year.

They claimed this would encourage 'conservation' and a cartoon was produced in the form of a 'free' annual water allowance of 40,000 litres per household.

Repeating the bullying threats of €200,000 a year boss of Irish Water, John Tierney, Phil Hogan declared that water pressure would be 'turned down to a trickle' for people who don't pay.

The figure of €250 a year is nonsense.

ESRI

A recent ESRI report sponsored by the government reveals that the cost of water in every home in the country will be as high as €500 a year.

The report also says water charges would rapidly increase over coming years leaving 160,000 pensioners, single people, lone parent families and large households unable to afford the bills and at risk of 'water poverty.'

Unless we stop them, Irish Water will be able to seek an annual hike in water charges from the Energy Regulator if households trying to conserve water usage hit their profits!

This bogus argument of 'conservation' is a joke. The greatest cause of water waste is leakage, with 41% of supply lost from antiquated pipes that successive governments failed to invest in.

If the €1 billion spent on water metering were invested in repairing leaky pipes, there would be no need for water charges.

FG/Labour's derisory 30,000 units



Police protect water meters in Togher Drive (Dublin)

will get you just one five-minute shower, two brushes of your teeth with the water running and one flush of the toilet per day before you pay the full cost.

Turning water into a commodity and forcing us pay for it is yet another savage way of making us suffer for the economic crimes of bankers and the wealthy.

It's also a scam to make vast profits for the rich.

The government has slashed public spending to pay off the bondholders, including cutting back on investment in the water infrastructure.

They intend to make us pay the 'full cost' for water instead. Irish Water has also declared its intention to increase private sector involvement and to make the system of charging lucrative ahead

of planned privatisation of our water.

These charges are the final straw and people across the country are starting to come out of their houses, gain confidence in numbers and organise successful resistance in a growing fightback against water metering in their estates.

Resistance and People Power

Protests against the installation of water meters by Sierra, a company owned by FG donor and billionaire tax dodger Denis O'Brien, gained its first complete victory when local activists and residents stopped attempts to meter their estate in Togher, Co. Cork.

Irish Water was forced to re-enter the estate and remove the six remaining meters previously installed.

This success has inspired similar pro-

tests to spread and there are currently water meter protests underway in Sligo, Kells, Raheny, Swords, Kimmage and elsewhere.

Some of the largest and most effective resistance is happening in Clondalkin.

The first step in building this kind of resistance to metering is:

- When Irish Water notifies estates that they're coming, a street meeting is immediately called in the middle of the estate.

- Doors are flyered and neighbours encouraged to come out and join.

- A vote is then taken on the best tactics to employ and this decision belongs to everyone.

- Phone numbers are gathered and a mobile network created to let each person know when there's an attempted

metering in the area.

- When Irish Water vans do enter an estate, large numbers of people arrive to sit down and block the road in front of them.

- Local People Before Profit representatives and other groups and parties opposed to water charges are contacted to help co-ordinate community resistance with the residents.

Right2 Water

The Right2Water Campaign was launched in April by over 200 activists and is holding public meetings to build towards a mass demonstration after the government returns from its holidays on 20 September.

Having mobilised locally, the street meetings are now moving to support the demo and link up nationally with other anti-water charges groups to bring the fight against this government right to their own doorstep.

Areas already metered or where installation won't happen before the 2015 deadline can also hold R2W meetings and call a mobilisation for 20 September.

From there, let's build a massive grassroots movement in our estates, workplaces and on the streets, escalating the struggle when the bills land in January 2015.

The people of Bolivia showed how to get rid of a government who tried to privatise their water supply. We can do the same here!

On the Frontline of Resistance to Metering

Socialist Worker spoke to Georgina, a local resident in Clondalkin who is currently helping to organise resistance to the metering in the area.

Hi Georgina. You have one of the most successful grassroots campaigns to date. Maybe you could let us know when you first realised that Irish Water were coming into Clondalkin?

"When I got their little booklet in my door telling me they were going to be here within the month. That's when I decided something needed to be done about it!"

We had to tell everybody so 300 leaflets for estates were printed saying water meters were imminent.

We called a street meeting on the local green and 45 people turned up. They voted unanimously to oppose the metering and not let them into our estate.

At the street meetings people started to talk about the Property Tax and austerity. There's a lot of anger and it gets very political!

We also invited every Councillor in Clondalkin but

only Gino Kenny of People Before Profit has turned up and he's been a tremendous help with our campaign.

Residents agreed that these are to be peaceful protests.

We will never cause criminal damage and we don't attack the water workers.

You speak politely but if any don't listen, we'll climb into the meter holes if we have to!

Perhaps you could describe the mood at the meetings and key decisions made?

The mood is RESISTANCE! People were sitting at home thinking they're the only ones that want to fight.

Then they come out and see their neighbours. They're talking to each other and building resistance with each other. It's a great atmosphere and bringing community spirit back as well!

They've now become so popular, we're having to call bigger and bigger street meetings. But we have to keep the fight going because momentum is everything.

How are we forcing Irish Water out of our estates? Because we're organised!



In Ronanstown we knew they were coming. We got 20 residents out and said to Irish Water, we don't want your meters. They said fair enough, turned around and left.

What's important is not even waiting for their letter - just text beforehand, spread the word and keep your eyes and ears on the street!

Finally, what are the next stages of the campaign?

The campaign is growing and

growing. It's going into other estates and residents there are leafleting and doing things for themselves. We have a great network going. There's now 1,000 people involved in the campaign and another 2,000 are on our Clondalkin Meter Watch facebook page.

But this isn't just a Clondalkin thing. It's a national protest! So when we march on Clondalkin council offices on 25 June, we'll be bringing everyone together

and mobilising them to join the national demo on 20 September.

Make no mistake. We're ready for Irish Water and we'll keep protesting! Tomorrow we'll be in another estate at 7.30 in the morning.

None of us are giving up this battle against water charges and the politicians that support them. They're condemning us to austerity for generations to come. And I'm gonna be here fighting for my kids."

The rise of the Far-Right in Europe

Brian O'Boyle

The Eurozone crisis is now into its seventh year. Across Europe, mainstream parties have attempted to cope with this disaster by imposing the costs onto working people.

Bank bailouts and austerity have been the stock response of the political establishment, as conservatives and social democrats have united in their attempts to solve the crisis in the interests of capital. In France, the Socialist Party replaced Sarkozy's UMP with little change in economic policy. In Britain it was the other way around, with the Conservatives continuing the austerity drive initiated by Labour. Unsurprisingly this has led to intolerable strain on the political centre.

In the South, the genuine left has been the principle beneficiary, wrenching support from social democracy across the Mediterranean. In Greece, the radical left coalition, Syriza, has become the leading party on 27% in the European elections - destroying PASOK in the process. In Portugal, the Left Bloc has now firmly established itself.

Whilst in Spain the rise of the United Left and Podemos has rocked the PSOE, with a combined vote of 18% and 11 seats in the European parliament.

Where austerity has been harshest, the left have succeeded in directing public anger to where it belongs. Big business and the bankers are rightly being blamed for destroying the lives of ordinary people.

This anti-capitalist sentiment has been the good news story of the Eurozone crisis. There is a darker side, however, in the form of right-wing extremism.

Right wing extremism

The rise of the far-right is now undeniable. The newly formed Europe of Freedom and Democracy group has just returned 38 MEPs on a hard right ultra-nationalist ticket. The fascists also made gains in the EU elections.

However it is important to understand the nature of this process. At the outset of the crisis, neoliberals in the core of the system displaced the worst effects onto the periphery. Bankers in France and Germany may have caused the crisis, but it was workers in Spain and Portugal that were blamed for its severity.

This created the context for an ultra-nationalist rhetoric against supposed 'parasites' in the so-called PIIGS. Parties like the True Finns and the Austrian Freedom Party flourished in this environment, as workers within these countries were encouraged to believe the austerity they were experiencing resulted from 'hand-outs' to their poorer neighbours.

This also helps to account for some of the anti-EU sentiment seized upon by populist parties such as UKIP and the Danish



Top right: UKIP leader Farage plays the outsider by drinking beer and spouting racism

People's Party. This wing of the hard-right has essentially used the crisis to demonise foreigners and divide the working classes within their own countries.

Everyone knows that welfare systems have been retrenched. Resources for schools and hospitals are also falling, with the poor and the marginalised increasingly made to compete for their survival. This is the material reality underpinning debates about immigration.

Across the EU fears about resource availability are being stoked by racist politicians anxious to paint themselves as champions of their 'people'. Nigel Farage is a perfect example of this phenomenon. The UKIP leader is a public schooled ex-city banker who tries to paint himself as the quintessential outsider.

Drinking pints and spouting racism is his strategy to connect with a section of the British public that is rightfully angry at the establishment and fearful for the future. UKIP managed to get 27% of the votes in the latest European election largely by channelling people's legitimate hatred of austerity onto European bureaucrats and foreign immigrants.

This strategy has borne fruit for the populist right across the EU - but it also helps to protect the ruling classes. Spouting anti-establishment rhetoric allows the hard right to seem like outsiders, whilst they actually take the heat off capital.

This helps to explain why they have been



Marine Le Pen leader of the openly racist Front National, who topped the polls in the latest French EU elections

given so much attention by the mainstream media. Neoliberals recognise the benefits they receive from people turning their anger away from the elites. Hard right parties help to achieve this and so they ultimately work in a symbiotic relationship with the mainstream establishment.

Meanwhile, the centre-left have been disgraceful in allowing this to happen. Instead of standing alongside foreigners, the Socialists in France and the British Labour party have openly conceded that there is a problem with immigration.

This has inevitably emboldened the rac-

ists with the fascists also increasing their support base.

The Fascists

Having taken over the Front National from her father, Marine Le Pen has guided this openly racist party to 25% in the latest elections.

This gives the FN 22 of 74 seats, making this virulently anti-immigrant party the largest bloc in one of the most powerful States of the European project. Fascism is also on the rise in Hungary where Jobbik polled 21% of the votes in April's national



elections, making them the second largest party in the parliament.

Whilst the populist right trades on the fear of the masses, Fascism turns that fear into action. In Greece, Golden Dawn have infiltrated the police, killed migrants and socialists and led a widespread campaign to take the streets in the name of the 'nation'. Capital rarely turns to the fascists unless the situation is particularly dire.

The class struggle in Greece is the sharpest in Europe, as workers increasingly put their hopes in Syriza, whilst the most reactionary elements turn to the fascists. Golden Dawn picked up 10% of the vote to the almost 30% gained by Syriza.

The anti-capitalist left is also recruiting, but the reality of thousands of fascists on the streets is extremely worrying.

For now the FN has put away its marching boots in order to appeal to a wider constituency. However in time they will no doubt reveal their true colours. All of this means that the radical left has an incredible amount of responsibility.

The rise of the right cannot be separated from the strategy of governments to make us pay for the crisis of capitalism. The far left wants solidarity, hope and participatory democracy. The far right wants fear, division and the dictatorship of property. We can't sit back and hope that people power will ultimately triumph.

We must act now to build up our forces in the name of humanity.

'The cell block is a microcosm of class society' says jailed Egyptian revolutionary

Leading Egyptian Revolutionary Socialist and human rights lawyer Mahienour el-Masry is serving a two year sentence for taking part in a protest in Alexandria. She also faces other charges with the possibility of an even longer sentence. Below is a portion of a letter written from prison.



Mahienour at a protest (Pic: Revolutionary Socialists)

I don't know much about what has happened outside since my prison sentence was confirmed. But I

imagine that just as when someone else in our circles was jailed, cyberspace is filling up with slogans demanding

'freedom for so-and-so' or 'the bravest are in jail' and so on.

But ever since I entered Damanhour

Women's Prison and joined the other inmates in Cell Block 1, the section of the prison for those convicted of general financial crimes, I can only think of one thing, "let's tear down this class system".

We must never forget what we're really fighting for in the midst of all our other battles, the goals for which we are losing comrades and friends. We mustn't become a campaign for the release of a particular person, and forget the demands of the Egyptian people who want to put food on the table.

At the same time as we are chanting against the Protest Law we should be fighting to bring down class society. We need to organise ourselves, engage with people, talk to them about the rights of the poor and our solutions to mounting injustice.

We need to call for freedom for the poor so that people do not feel that we are distant from them.

If we are going to raise the slogan of freedom for anyone, let it be freedom for Sayyida, Hela and Fasma, three girls I met in the Alexandria Security Directorate. They are accused of

belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood, and are facing charges which could lead to a death sentence. They were arrested at random and their detention was renewed in January without ever coming before a court.

Freedom for Um Ahmed who hasn't seen her children for 8 years. Freedom for Um Dina who is the breadwinner for her family. Freedom for Na'amut who got into debt in order to feed her children. Freedom for Fatma, Wafaa, Kawthar, Sanaa, Dawlat, Samia, Iman, Amal and Mervat.

Our pain is nothing to theirs. We know that there are others who will say they are proud to have known us, but these women will only be remembered with pride at their own family gatherings.

Let's bring down this class society, but we will never be able to do this if we forget those who are truly oppressed.

Mahienour el-Masry
Cell 8, Block 1, Damanhour Women's Prison

22 May 2014

To find out about building solidarity with all detainees in Egypt go to egyptsolidarityinitiative.org

Socialist Worker



'I am not a unionist or a nationalist but a socialist' says Gerry Carroll.

Gerry Carroll's stunning election victory in the Black Mountain ward of Belfast has opened up the possibility of socialist politics growing in the North. Many commentators were at odds to explain how a left wing candidate almost topped the poll in a constituency regarded as Sinn Fein's heartland.

But Gerry Carroll's victory did not come out of nowhere. He has long been active in left wing politics in Belfast and was once banned from entering the city centre by a right wing judge who claimed that he was stoking up trouble during a student demonstration.

The charges brought against him by the PSNI were a transparent attempt to hinder socialist activity in Belfast.

On his first day on entering Belfast City Council, Gerry Carroll was asked by one of the officials where he would like to sit. He was told that seats on one side was for the unionists and those on the other side were for the nationalists.

"The remark summed up the North in a microcosm. I answered that 'I am not a nationalist or a unionist but a socialist,' Gerry Carroll said.

Socialist Worker spoke with the new West Belfast councillor who puts his victory down to a combination of hard work and radical politics.

How did you manage to break the mould for left wing candidates in the North?

"We were elected because over the years we have built a left wing base in West Belfast. We've campaigned on a wide range of issues over the years and will continue to do so.

I think people have seen us putting in the work on the ground and we have offered a clear political alternative.

Many are fed up with the politicians and our vote is an indication that there is a real desire for an alternative.

You were elected quite comfortably taking the 5th seat out of 7. Were you a little bit surprised by how well you polled?

No, because there is a lot of anger here and I think it is the same story with every constituency in the North.

On the morning of the count we told all of the journalists that we thought we would take a seat and to be frank, they

looked at us like we had two heads.

But People Before Profit has earned a reputation as consistent opponents to cuts and privatisation.

We've campaigned on a range of issues over the years so it's no surprise to me that we have done well.

Over the coming weeks we will seek

to deliver on what we said in our election

manifesto. We'll continue to expose those

parties who are imposing cuts against eve-

rything from Irish language groups to our

Health Service.

What sort of campaigns have you been involved in in West Belfast?

We have a long history of campaigning in West Belfast - against water charges, car parking taxes, library closures, the sell-off of Andersonstown barracks site - to name but a few.

On the doorsteps we found the issue people most supported us on was our opposition to cuts in the Royal hospital.

Around Casement we campaigned with residents against an unwanted development while the SDLP and Sinn Fein did the opposite.

We organised large public meetings and protests against the handover of leisure centres.

Belfast is being reshaped by a neo-liberal agenda.

We believe that we need people power, to help fight to shape it for ordinary people.

It must be a great feeling to be the first socialist elected to Belfast City Council for decades...

It is a fantastic feeling, and I have to thank everyone who voted for me, but this is just the beginning.

We want this to be the birth of a new type of politics in the North. People are fed up with the status quo.

None of the major parties here represent the interests of working class people. The SDLP are past their political sell by date

and Sinn Fein have abandoned any left wing principles they once had.

On the flip side of the coin the Unionist parties do absolutely nothing for ordinary Protestants, are backward in terms of LGBT issues, and have shown nothing but contempt for ethnic minorities.

Peter Robinson's recent comments about Muslims were a disgrace and his meek apology was an insult to those people he offended. Quite frankly he should have resigned.

Someone in his position should challenge racism not open the door for racists.

How do you hope to build from here?

We will carry on doing what we are doing and we hope people will join us in the fight.

We need socialists and we need activists. Having a councillor elected will make a big difference.

Now we can highlight working class is-

sues from the floor of Belfast City Council.

I've been able to do that already in the inaugural meeting by pointing out the hypocrisy of councillors giving themselves a pay rise while public sector workers are faced with a pay freeze.

But the reality is that for real change we need people on the ground to join us in the fight.

We're at an impasse here. Stormont has institutionalised sectarian divisions instead of actually challenging them.

It will be a long and hard struggle to change this society but our result in the election has shown that with the right politics we can make serious steps forward.

Ultimately we aim to unite people, Catholic and Protestant, on a class basis, to challenge the sectarian divide and to fight for a different type of society- that puts people before profit.

Anyone who agrees with us then we would ask them to join us in the fight.